

‘THE SECRET NAZI NETWORK’:  
POST WORLD WAR II LATVIAN IMMIGRANTS AND THE HUNT FOR NAZIS  
IN THE UNITED STATES

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## Abstract

This is a case study of post World War II refugees from Latvia in the US during the 1970s and 80s when a number of them were accused by the Office of Special Investigations of having lied on their immigration forms about their collaboration with the Nazis. The story was presented by the news media, politicians and activists as proof of a “secret Nazi network,” which was then linked to the Republican Party and used to discredit it. Using data from American and Latvian periodicals, printed materials and archival records, this study uncovers the complexities in small immigrant groups’ collective memory, political position and relations with the dominant group. The study shows how an immigrant community becomes involved in political controversy which causes it to undergo a difficult intragroup debate over its history and public image.

## INTRODUCTION

In the late 1970s and 1980s the Latvian immigrant community in the United States suddenly found itself in the limelight of American public scrutiny. Latvian names such as Maikovskis, Sproģis, Detlavs, Hāzners, Inde, Kalējs and Arājs regularly appeared in the local and national news and were mentioned in numerous newspaper articles and books. These men were brought before civil courts and charged with having concealed their war crimes during World War II when filling out immigration applications in the late 1940s and early 1950s. They were threatened with deportation to the USSR. Among the accusers were the Immigration and Naturalization Services, the Office of Special Investigations of the Justice Department, journalists, researchers and politicians.

This study reveals how the war crime accusations grew into a divisive and politically charged issue by the end of the 1980s. On the one hand, a small refugee group with a controversial history and political position became entangled in the American political conflicts. On the other hand, the offended Latvian émigrés<sup>1</sup> set forth to defend their public image and to question the interpretation of history propounded by their accusers, which led into a polarizing intra-group dispute. This affected their collective memory as well as integration into the American context.

Although Latvians are a small immigrant community, they represent an interesting case of “the American Dream” in the history of American immigration. Fearing the return of the Soviet rule somewhere between 120,000 and 150,000 Latvians fled Latvia for the West in 1944. They first went to Germany or Sweden and then to the US, Australia and Great Britain. About 45,000 of them settled in the US and by 1970

their number had increased to 86,413 with the biggest Latvian communities in New York, California, Illinois, New Jersey and Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup> According to the US Census, 75,747 persons claimed Latvian ancestry in 1990.

Exile Latvians did not create separate ethnic enclaves, however most of them concentrated their identity-oriented activities around Lutheran church centers, which hosted Sunday schools of Latvian culture and language, organized holiday celebrations and published newspapers, newsletters and even journals. At the same time, American Latvians formed strong secular organizations (foundations, political groups, self-help and welfare organizations), which were unified under the umbrella of the American Latvian Association headquartered in Maryland. One of the reasons for this intellectual and political activity was that according to some estimates about 50% of Latvian intelligentsia became refugees at the end of World War II.<sup>3</sup> For example, in 1939, the University of Latvia had 446 faculty members, 360 of which were abroad in 1952 with about half of them in the US.<sup>4</sup> Unsurprisingly American Latvian community maintained active cultural life. They created theatres, organized local choirs that gathered in large scale Song Festivals, published fiction and non-fiction, and put together art exhibitions.

Still during their early years in the US, most American Latvians worked in manual and farm labor. Quite soon they accumulated considerable social and monetary capital, and most of them achieved comfortable middle-class status if not already in the first, then definitely in the second generation. The 1990 census indicated that 48.5% of American Latvians were employed in managerial and professional and 30.7% were employed in technical, sales and administrative occupations. Their family median income

was \$51,209 in 1990, which was substantially higher than the overall American family median income of \$35,225.

Latvian refugees successfully adopted the core American values such as focus on personal success, self-sufficiency and independence. Interestingly, this did not appear to contradict with their self-perception as political exiles whose lives were dedicated to the struggle for their country's independence. For decades, they were convinced that they would return to Latvia as soon as Soviet rule was lifted and therefore called themselves American Latvians, not – Latvian Americans. Their political attitudes were greatly shaped by the experience of the Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1940-41 and the subsequent Nazi occupation of 1941-44. They fled Latvia in the face of the returning Soviet occupation in 1944 and for a few years lived in a legal limbo in Germany's Displaced Persons camps.<sup>5</sup> They saw themselves as refugees forced into exile by the Communists and therefore many of them perceived the threats of Communism as worse than those of Nazism. Most of the American Latvians never forgave F.D. Roosevelt for "selling" the Baltic States to the Soviets during the Yalta conference at the end of the World War II and therefore tended to support the Republicans during the Cold War years.

Thus, Latvian refugees brought along important and complex historical controversies, especially in regard to the Latvian role in the Holocaust. In 1935 about 94,000 Jews resided in Latvia making up slightly more than 4% of its population. After the Soviet deportations and murders of 1940 and Jewish emigration, approximately 67,000 Jews remained in Latvia by the time of the Nazi invasion. Approximately 62,000 of them were killed during the Nazi occupation. About 30,000 Jews were killed already by mid-August 1941. The main agents of this murder were small German military units

joined by the so-called Arājs Commando and assisted by Latvian auxiliary police, which consisted mainly of volunteers. In late 1941 approximately an additional 30,000 Latvian Jews were killed in a carefully organized execution also aided by Latvian police and Arājs Commando in Rumbula forest, just outside the capital city of Rīga. After this, about 25,000 European Jews were brought to Rīga Ghetto by train and at least half of them were murdered by mid-1942.<sup>6</sup> The Nazi occupation regime formed other Latvian military units, which were mainly used to fight partisans in Russia and participate in operations on the front.

Due to this history, the American hunt for Nazis in the US also targeted Latvian émigrés. This article does not dispute the facts about the Holocaust and the role of some Latvians in it. Its main goal however is to study how the investigations in the US took place within a heated media and political context and how the immigrant community reacted in this situation. In other words, this is a historical and sociological exploration of both American and Latvian immigrant public rhetoric of the era. Methodologically, it is based on the assumption that periodicals, books and research reports are valuable sources for revealing public's views and their main trends. I reviewed about 400 publications relating to the Nazi hunt among Latvians in the US and Latvians' response. From the American sources, I used *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* as well as local newspapers and books. From the American Latvian side, I employed materials from the newspaper *Laiks*, and the journals *Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts*, *Akadēmiskā Dzīve* and *Treji Vārti*.<sup>7</sup> I also relied on memoirs of Latvian émigrés, books published by American Latvian organizations and the archival records (agendas, meeting minutes, correspondence, resolutions, publicity materials) of the

American Latvian Association and other American Latvian organizations. Finally, I employed interviews and personal communication with notable figures of the exile community such as historian Andrievs Ezergailis, leaders of the ALA Aristīds Lembergs and Valdis Pavlovskis, political scientist Atis Lejiņš and activist Māris Manteniēks.

## COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

The case of the post World War II Latvian refugees offers invaluable historical and sociological knowledge about immigrants' collective memory and integration into the American political context. This study advances the idea that memory, both collective and individual, is more often constructed than reproduced, and that "this construction is not made in isolation but in conversations with others that occur in the contexts of community."<sup>8</sup> Thus, I agree with other researchers in the field<sup>9</sup> that social environments and communities greatly affect the ways people remember their personal as well as collective past. This argument does not mean, however, that there are no historical facts or that all history is constructed. The pursuit of finding historical truth is possible and necessary, but often it may have little to do with whatever the communities want to remember. While occasionally some historians get involved in politically driven projects of collective memory, usually collective memory is created and maintained by other agents such as media, intelligentsia, political activists and organizations. This study shows how volatile collective memory becomes in a situation when an immigrant group has to defend its perception of the past to the public of its host country. The immigrants, as all other groups, tend to emphasize some parts of their past, while trying to "forget"

others<sup>10</sup> because to them the process of remembrance is an intrinsic part of their identity and a way to resist assimilation and build distance from outsiders. One of the best tools for this purpose is political history where one or another way of intentionally recalling or concealing controversial events can effectively separate “us” from “non-us.” In other words, immigrants use their memories in ways that serve them in the present time and keep the community together.

At the same time, remembrance can also become a source of dramatic internal disagreements<sup>11</sup> or “mnemonic battles,” which are intra-group struggles over how and what should be collectively remembered.<sup>12</sup> Such battles can sometimes help communities reach “consensus” about their past, other times they lead to polarization and splits. As noted, another way to collectively remember is by avoiding historical discussions and insisting on forgetting some experiences. Some of the immigrants may have a vested interest in making sure that certain events are never remembered. Refugees are frequently driven by a desire to create a positive and trustworthy outer image using selective memories. In other words, collective amnesia can be as significant to an immigrant community as collective memory.<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, the collective memory of a minority group is related to the dominant group’s collective memory, which too is focused on unifying and celebrating the community, than revealing full historical truth.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, minority groups face situations where their collective memories contradict what the dominant groups remember and both accuse each other of misinterpreting the past. Such a conflict can alienate immigrants from the mainstream context making them feel misunderstood, which, of course, impedes their ability to integrate.

Aspects of collective memory such as mnemonic battles, amnesia and conflicts with the dominant groups' collective memory can be effectively explored through the case of American Latvian immigrants. Their experience also gives valuable insights about refugee integration and their relation to political controversies. Small immigrant communities in the US have not received much scholarly attention as most studies have focused on large groups or groups that have had notable influence or are perceived to have been oppressed more than others.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, not enough research has been done on post World War II Eastern Europeans<sup>16</sup> and Baltic refugees<sup>17</sup> in general and even less is known about their political role in the US. There is little empirical data about the general political preferences and interests of post World War II Eastern European immigrants in the 1970s and 80s. Some studies did not include them in their samples, while those that did, found that in the 1950s and 60s Eastern Europeans as ethnicities with "lower prestige" tended to identify more with the Democratic Party.<sup>18</sup> Later into the 1970s, the Republicans maintained an anti-Communist stance as part of their political agenda and thus attracted more Eastern European support.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, most sociologists could not ascertain for sure that ethnic identity actually mattered in American voting behavior.<sup>20</sup> And there was no convincing proof that the Eastern European ethnic vote had *substantially* influenced American foreign policy.<sup>21</sup>

Still, there is historical data, which shows that the Republican Party was interested in Eastern European immigrants and refugees and that at least some of the Latvians supported the Republicans. For example, President Gerald R. Ford in a speech to the representatives of the National Republican Heritage Groups Council in 1975 specifically praised the Latvians for their ability to organize effectively after coming to the US. His

positive attitude toward the Latvians might have been determined by the continuous support that they provided during his Congressional campaigns in Michigan. Ronald Reagan was also known for focusing on Eastern Europeans, who were always happy to hear his emphasis on the US commitment to restoring freedom and national independence in Communist countries.<sup>22</sup> He also signed House Resolution 201 declaring June 14, 1983 as Baltic Freedom Day with which he officially re-asserted that the United States perceived the Baltic nations as illegally occupied by the USSR.<sup>23</sup>

Although the American Latvian Association (ALA) for years targeted both parties with their demands regarding Soviet occupation, many Latvians believed that only the Republicans supported the struggle for Latvia's independence. Already in 1968 influential members of ALA and Daugavas Vanagi organization<sup>24</sup> created an American-Latvian section within the Nationalities Division of the Nixon-Agnew presidential campaign, which produced campaign materials urging the American Latvians to support Nixon's candidacy.<sup>25</sup> No such campaign materials on behalf of the Democrats were found in ALA's records, which leads to a conclusion that if there were American Latvians who voted Democrat they were in minority and not as organizationally active. Similarly, the archival records attested to the existence of an active Latvian Republican Association, while there was no information about an equivalent Latvian Democratic club.<sup>26</sup>

Sometimes, but not always, these political connections proved helpful to the Latvians. For example, they managed to at least temporarily prevent looming budget cuts for the radio broadcasting from Spain to Soviet Latvia in the late 1960s. Latvians also gained representation and some visibility in the National Republican National Heritage Groups Council, the Assembly of Captive European Nations and the Coalition for Peace

through Strength. Thus they participated in the voting block which had allegedly been put together by figures such as Laszlo Pasztor<sup>27</sup> and which supported the Republicans during the presidential terms of Nixon, Ford and Carter. The actual impact of this voting block and other organizations is debatable, although often overstated.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, the limited connections between Eastern Europeans, including Latvians, and conservative American political forces were enough to create a political and media controversy about a Right-wing Nazi conspiracy in the late 1970s and 80s, and particularly toward the end of the 1988 presidential campaign. In my analysis of this episode, I highlight the political role that the American Latvians were perceived to be playing, not so much their actual influence. I also do not claim that the American authors discussed here were biased because they were personally involved in presidential campaigns. I also do acknowledge that very likely there were former Nazis and Nazi collaborators among the Latvian émigrés. At the same time, this study is intended to show that the scandal about the refugee Right-wing Nazis was at least partially related to a fierce political contest in the American context, which had little to do with Latvians themselves. Thus, the public scrutiny of the Latvian community did not take place in a political vacuum.

## WAR CRIME ACCUSATIONS AND POLITICS

### *Latvian war criminals in the news*

As the respected and well-documented research of historian Andrievs Ezergailis has shown, a number of Latvian men were directly involved in the Holocaust on Latvia's territory.<sup>29</sup> They were initially participated in the so-called self-defense police forces that

were created for keeping order and occasionally were used to guard and expedite the Nazi murders of Jews in Rumbula forest and other locations. There was also Latvian auxiliary police (created after the disbandment of self-defense units) that participated in the guarding and transporting of Jews to be killed by the Nazis. The Nazis also created a Latvian SD (*Sicherheitsdienst* or Security Police) chapter consisting of Latvian volunteers that became known as the Arājs Commando, which was a killing unit that had no equivalent anywhere in Europe. It was involved in the massacres in the Biķernieki forest and other small-town killings and later was used by Germans to fight the partisans in Russia and elsewhere.<sup>30</sup> Later in the war the Nazis also created a number of Police Battalions using a variety of recruitment strategies including threats and imprisonment for disobedience. These Battalions were mainly intended to fight partisans in Russia, but some of them may have been used in guarding the Warsaw Ghetto.

Finally, in 1943, when the German army ran into manpower problems, they created the so-called “SS-Volunteer-Legion” or Baltic Waffen SS, which was not volunteer, but rather consisted of soldiers conscripted by force under German military command. It was mainly a fighting unit involved in the front operations. Some of the Legionaries came from the SD and police units discussed earlier, however there is no historical documentation showing that the Legion itself was involved in war-crimes. In 1945, most of the surviving Legionaries ended up in the Displaced Persons camps in Germany awaiting a chance to emigrate. Among them were both the former Nazi collaborators as well as the soldiers recruited for the war operations. After a five-year long investigation and a political controversy, the US Displaced Persons Commission finally decided that the Legionaries as a whole should be disentangled from the

association with German SS, should not be considered hostile to the United States and could be allowed to immigrate to the US.<sup>31</sup> Largely Latvians were accomplices and helpers of the Nazis, but they did not (in fact, could not because the Nazis would not allow that) themselves initiate the murders of Jews.

Still, the part that Latvians had played in the World War II was very complicated and difficult to sort out. The 1970s Nazi hunt in the US was faced with this reality and it was made even more complicated by the Soviet KGB and Ministry of Interior that supposedly agreed to help the American authorities, while at the same time concealed some information and distributed misinformation such as the publications *People without Consciousness* (1961), *Daugavas Vanagi – Who are They?* (1962) and *Political Refugees – Without a Mask* (1963). These brochures contained lists of alleged Latvian war criminals and descriptions of their supposed deeds. Unfortunately, until this evidence was rejected as unreliable by the American courts, the investigators and prosecutors used it in identifying the war criminals among the émigrés. It is highly likely that there were war criminals among the Latvian refugees, however due to the use of unreliable information the prosecutors often spent much effort and time chasing falsely accused Latvians, while the true war criminals escaped punishment.<sup>32</sup> Thus although there were thirteen war-crime trials of Latvians in the US only in those of Maikovskis and Kalējs were the prosecutors able to show that they had misinformed the immigration authorities about their activities during World War II and these two individuals were ordered to be deported. The others were acquitted due to insufficient evidence.

Among the first cases of war crime prosecution that drew the mainstream media's attention to the Latvian community was that of Vilis Hāznerns in 1976. The United States

Immigration and Naturalization services initiated a deportation case claiming that he had lied about his involvement in the Holocaust.<sup>33</sup> The case went on for several years and in the end Hāznars was acquitted. However, the case received extensive coverage in local periodicals, which routinely described Hāznars as a Nazi and Latvia as a site of the worst Nazi atrocities.<sup>34</sup> National publications such as *The New York Times* also discussed this and other war crime accusations pointing out that “almost all the suspects are from Eastern Europe, particularly the former republics of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.”<sup>35</sup>

The unsuccessful cases of INS’ war crime prosecutions and such scandalous books as *Wanted! The Search for the Nazis in America*<sup>36</sup> attracted the attention of American politicians. Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman, Democrat from Brooklyn, made it into her issue in 1975.<sup>37</sup> After a prolonged campaign, which included her visit to the first Deputy Procurator General of the USSR Mikhail Malyarov,<sup>38</sup> a bill proposed by Holtzman was signed into law in 1978. It authorized the government to deport aliens proved to have been involved in Nazi war crimes. The government institution charged with this task was the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) in the Criminal Division of the Justice Department. Its activities brought more American Latvian names to the headlines.<sup>39</sup>

In the mid-1980s, public interest in the search for war criminals was further fueled by the writings of OSI chief Allan Ryan and journalist Rochelle Saidel. Ryan’s book *Quite Neighbors* described his work at the OSI and it started out with the astonishing statement that Nazi war criminals, including those from the Baltic countries, had come to the US by the thousands.<sup>40</sup> He described the Baltic refugees as people with suspect motivations and alluded to their pro-Nazi sentiments and collaborationist past. He

accused the US Congress of intentionally privileging these suspect Baltics over the Jewish Holocaust survivors and criticized American society for discounting the threats of Nazism, over-emphasizing Communist dangers and thus unnecessarily favoring the largely anti-Communist Eastern European émigrés.<sup>41</sup> Ryan's book was widely reviewed and well received.<sup>42</sup> Rochelle Saidel was a journalist in Albany, NY who observed Vilis Hāzners' trial. Her book was a description of the individuals who, to her mind, had been the most heroic Nazi hunters in the US such as journalist Charles R. Allen, Rabbi Paul Sifton, Simon Wiesenthal and Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman. She also criticized both the American prosecutors and main Jewish organizations for the failure to prosecute and deport people like Hāzners.

Noticeably, from the mid-1980s onward the media and political activists' interest in the Nazi presence in the US grew bigger and Latvian names appeared more regularly on the news. *The New York Times* wrote about the Maikovskis<sup>43</sup> case and described him as "an 81-year-old Latvian who ordered the destruction of a Russian Orthodox village and the arrest of its residents – who were soon massacred."<sup>44</sup> A few months later the newspaper reported that the Supreme Court had rejected Maikovskis' appeal,<sup>45</sup> and when Maikovskis managed to flee to Europe, *The New York Times* published an additional three articles by Ralph Blumenthal on the case within a period of about one week.<sup>46</sup> Finally, in 1994 the newspaper informed its readers that "Maikovskis's case closed because his heart was deemed too weak for another court appearance."<sup>47</sup>

Another case that caught the attention of *The New York Times* was that of Elmārs Sproģis, who was accused of participating in the execution of Jews in Latvia during the summer of 1941.<sup>48</sup> This case was especially interesting to the news media due to the

attempted assassination of Sproģis. For example, *The New York Times* published six articles about the case and the attack.<sup>49</sup> The case of Edgars Laipenieks was discussed in only one article saying that “the Government had failed to prove that Edgars Laipenieks, then a member of the Latvian Political Police, persecuted Communist prisoners at the Riga Central Prison in Latvia because of their political beliefs.”<sup>50</sup> *The New York Times* briefly covered the case of Konrāds Kalējs in the spring of 1985.<sup>51</sup> *The Washington Post* also reported about the war crime accusations in, for example, a longer article about how the Eastern European émigrés created obstacles for the OSI investigations.<sup>52</sup> In 1988, the news media focused again on the case of Edgars Inde writing that according to Federal authorities “Inde, a native of Latvia, participated in killing unarmed Jews and other civilians in 1941 and 1942.”<sup>53</sup> Then, the interest in the war criminal prosecutions dramatically declined. The only reminder of this episode was a letter from Elliot Welles, the Director of the Task Force on Nazi War Criminals of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, published in 1992 saying that the Nazi hunt could not be over because there were still many Latvian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Nazis on the loose in the US.<sup>54</sup>

The news media focused only on selected cases which appeared more scandalous or intriguing such as the bombing at the Sproģis house or Maikovskis’ flight to West Germany. Often their reports reflected confusion about the different forms of Latvian conscription into the Nazi military and the times of their creation. For example, *The New York Times* in one place reported that the accused Edgars Inde “belonged to a commando unit known as the Latvian Auxiliary Police”<sup>55</sup> and in the other that he “belonged to the Arājs Commando.”<sup>56</sup> In reality, the Auxiliary Police and Arājs Commando were two different formations and their activities did not overlap.<sup>57</sup> In the Hāzners’ case both the

prosecutors and the journalists appeared confused claiming that Hāzners had participated in the burning of a Rīga synagogue and the destruction of the Daugavpils' Ghetto as a member of the Latvian SS Legion,<sup>58</sup> which could not have been involved in this because it had not been created until at least a year later. Laipenieks was described as a member of the Latvian Political Police<sup>59</sup> of which there is no historical record. Although there was some opposition to these revisionist efforts in American media,<sup>60</sup> the regularity of the accusatory reports, the shocking descriptions of the supposed deeds of the accused (burning villages, killing women and children, etc.) and the identifier “Latvian” unquestionably contributed to creating a negative image of the Latvian immigrants.

Furthermore, reports about the Nazi hunt did not remain an isolated, short-term news story. At a certain point, they became a part of a larger “political scandal,” which linked two facts: first, that there were persons who participated in the Holocaust among the post-World War II refugees, and, second, that these groups tended to support conservative and anti-communist politics. Unfortunately, the concern for historical accuracy became secondary in this context. Some of the strongest claims here were made by journalists and researchers/activists such as Howard Blum, Charles Higham, Christopher Simpson, Russ Bellant and others. Among their techniques were the creation of a sense of suspicion about the presence of the Nazis and the US government protecting them, and overemphasizing of the influence of post World War II refugees.

### *Sense of suspicion*

At the end of the 1980s Latvians were pulled into the media and political activists' campaign to uncover how the government had secretly brought the former

Nazis to the US, and employed and financially supported them. There is some historical truth to the claim that the US government hired former Nazis right after World War II.<sup>61</sup> However, in the 1980s such revelations were rather intended to create a sense of suspicion about certain immigrant groups and the government, rather than find out the truth about them.

The first writing about the secret and protected presence of former Nazis in the US appeared as early as 1963 when journalist Charles R. Allen published a small book *Nazi War Criminals Among Us*, which received mild public attention.<sup>62</sup> This was followed by the fear-generating statements of Howard Blum's book from 1977 claiming that the secret Nazi network ODESSA had representatives in and enjoyed the protection of the CIA, INS, the judicial system and the federal government. The network was supposedly so powerful that it could create obstacles to the prosecution of the Nazis, destroy evidence and threaten witnesses and prosecutors in trials like that of Vilis Hāznars. Unfortunately, Blum's book contained no references or notes on its sources.

Then in 1984 journalist Rochelle Saidel came out with a statement that the US government had not only known about the Nazi criminals entering the country, but also employed them.<sup>63</sup> A year later, Charles Higham continued this argument by describing the extent to which German, Romanian, Croatian and Latvian war criminals had been sheltered by the US government, recruited by the CIA and allowed to take part in a variety of government activities.<sup>64</sup> In 1986, Scott Anderson and Jon Lee Anderson wrote that the participation of Eastern Europeans such as Latvians in the Holocaust was "one of the least-told stories in modern history"<sup>65</sup> because these people had been "recruited by American and British intelligence, brought into the United States and Canada, allowed to

rise to prominent positions in their émigré communities, and ultimately to revise history.”<sup>66</sup> Next Christopher Simpson claimed that the CIA and other government institutions secretly sponsored Nazi-led Latvian émigré organizations.<sup>67</sup>

Such statements subsided after 1988 and were revived again in 1994 by John Loftus (a former OSI staff attorney) and Mark Aarons who wrote that Eastern European “Fascist immigrant groups” had “a ready-made network,” which had been effectively transported from Eastern Europe to the United States by the CIA and established here in the form of such Right-wing émigré organizations as the Latvian Daugavas Vanagi.<sup>68</sup> These ideas about American Latvian organizations originated already in Blum’s assertions that Daugavas Vanagi, which was openly anti-communist, existed mainly so that the “war criminals” from “the Latvian SS regiment (Legion)” could survive until the day their countries such as Latvia “would be again a fascist, anti-Jewish, anti-Communist state.”<sup>69</sup> Christopher Simpson also described Daugavas Vanagi as a “secretive organization,” which was led by “several Vanagis (sic!) who had once been high-level Nazi collaborators,” had been subsidized by the CIA, had established notable control over the American Latvian community and had been strong enough to change the US government’s attitude toward the Baltic Waffen SS in the 1950s.<sup>70</sup>

These claims often were built on overstatements and misrepresentations. For example, the Baltic Waffen SS or the Latvian Legion was described as consisting of “volunteers” and “nazified” Latvians who participated in the Holocaust<sup>71</sup> thus conflating auxiliary police units, Arājs Commando and the Legion, which all were formed in different ways and fulfilled different functions within the Nazi war “master plan.” Daugavas Vanagi organization was described as “an organization composed of the

Latvian SS officers and government ministers who oversaw the Final Solution in their country,”<sup>72</sup> when actually the Latvian Waffen SS had not been created at the time of the murder of Latvian Jews and the so-called Latvian self-administration was not allowed by the Nazis to oversee the destruction of Jews on Latvia’s territory.<sup>73</sup> Although Christopher Simpson’s writing was more careful, he also tended to conflate terms such as “Latvian SS” and “Nazi collaborators” and failed to note how, when and with what purpose exactly Latvian SS had been created.<sup>74</sup>

Russ Bellant in his widely known report about the connections between the Republican Party and the domestic Nazi networks also included a number of misrepresentations, which helped to create suspicion about the Baltic refugees.<sup>75</sup> First, he stated that during the Baltics’ immigration to the US a number of the Legion’s soldiers were allowed in. He then explained that the Baltic Legion was also known as the Baltic Waffen SS to which he added that the Waffen SS “participated in the liquidation of Jews in the Baltic region because the SS units were comprised of Hitler’s loyal henchmen, recruited from fascist political groups long tied to the German Nazi Party.” Although he did not explicitly say that the Baltic Waffen SS was just like the German one, he did write that “they” (not specifying whether he meant German or Baltic Waffen SS) “were now considered qualified to come to the United States.” Moreover, in the next paragraphs Bellant suggests that the Latvian Legion had already been created by the German SS before the war and that its 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Divisions were among the “units” (not specified which exactly) that had participated in the Holocaust. In other words, Bellant’s continuous sliding between the terms such as Baltic Waffen SS, Waffen SS, “mobile killing units” and the Latvian Legion created a confusing picture, where all Latvian

military and police formations appeared responsible for the Holocaust. This left an impression that to Bellant the exact historical facts were secondary to the goal of creating political impact.

Although it was very likely that there were some Nazi collaborators among the Latvian émigrés, the public discussion about them and their trials showed unproductive tendencies. The journalists and researchers who covered the presence of the Nazis in the US and their trails appeared to find it difficult to accept the US government's support the immigrants who openly declared their anti-communist and pro-conservative views. The political attitudes of these refugees seemed too extreme, which led some of the authors to look for something hideous in these immigrants' past. The discussed journalists and researchers also ended up hinting that the US government's support of these suspicious refugees revealed its own corrupt, pro-Nazi and fascistic face. Consequently, the image of the Nazi murderers among the refugees, now US citizens, was rather intended to create paranoia about the US government and its decisions, than to uncover the historical truth about the Nazi war criminals.

#### *The secret Nazi network*

Another unproductive rhetorical strategy used by the mainstream media and researchers/activists was a claim that the right-wing émigrés and their organizations had become an omnipotent secret force in American politics. Among the first ones to promote this idea was journalist Charles R. Allen who testified to the House Subcommittee on Immigration in 1978 that Eastern European Nazi organizations had been "transplanted" to the US and that they had forged direct links to "the American Far Right."<sup>76</sup> A few

years later Christopher Simpson also stated that “extreme-right-wing exiles” had managed to “expand their reach in American affairs.”<sup>77</sup> According to him, the anti-communist stance in American foreign and domestic policy was determined by the secret Eastern European alliance with the American anti-communists, which had led the US government to refuse arms control treaties, trade or any other kind of cooperation with the USSR, but instead promoted “relentless preparation for war.”<sup>78</sup> Anderson and Anderson declared that the Eastern European “fascists ... became Republican and Democratic Party officials, attended receptions in the White House, and met with presidents, vice-presidents, congressmen, and senators.”<sup>79</sup>

Russ Bellant, a researcher at the liberal think tank Political Research Associates,<sup>80</sup> made some of the strongest accusations of this sort. He argued that the former Nazis from the Eastern European countries were actively involved in the Republican Party and that GOP had routinely refused to investigate their backgrounds. He stated that the Republican Heritage Groups Council had “consciously” recruited some of its members from the émigré Nazi networks, which included “anti-Semites, racists, authoritarians and fascists, including sympathizers and collaborators of Hitler’s Third Reich, former Nazis and even possible war criminals.”<sup>81</sup> According to Bellant, almost all of the Eastern European immigrant groups harbored Nazi or Fascist sympathizers and they only used their anti-communist views as a cover.<sup>82</sup> Bellant also stated that “the foundation of the Republican Heritage Groups Council lay in Hitler’s networks into East Europe before World War II.”<sup>83</sup>

Bellant’s report came out in September-November of 1988. Around the same time similar accusations were published by *The Washington Jewish Week*, which demanded

immediate removal of the Nazi collaborators from the Republican Party.<sup>84</sup> Soon *The New York Times* picked up the story, quoted the articles from *The Washington Jewish Week* and reported that Bush's campaign included a number of Rumanian and Hungarian fascists and Nazi sympathizers.<sup>85</sup> The next day *Philadelphia Inquirer* joined in and quoted Bellant's report.<sup>86</sup> A few days later *Philadelphia Inquirer* added that Latvian Nazi Boļeslavs Maikovskis also had been involved in President Nixon's campaign in 1972. *Boston Globe* described these revelations as "a moral and political scandal that has been covered up far too long. It is the scandal of the Republican Party's fascist connection."<sup>87</sup> A few days later, *Philadelphia Inquirer* pronounced that another Latvian Akselis Herbet Mangulis, a volunteer ethnic leader of Bush's presidential campaign, had served in the Latvian Legion.<sup>88</sup> Unwilling to engage in a debate about the historical details, Bush's campaign quickly suspended Mangulis and seven other alleged Eastern European Nazis from the campaign's Coalition of American Nationalities. Then in November 19, *The New York Times* published Bellant's article where he stated that Bush had failed to oust all of the Nazi collaborators from the Republican Party.<sup>89</sup>

Most of the journalists and activists covering this story did not openly take political sides. The exceptions were Chip Berlet and Russ Bellant from Political Research Associates. Berlet wrote in September of 1988 that if George Bush were to become the President he would continue to collaborate with the anti-Communist Nazis, anti-Semites, fascists and racists.<sup>90</sup> Bellant stated numerous times that Bush and the Republican Party offered to the American public fascism and ethnic prejudices.<sup>91</sup> Regardless of their objective tone, the historical lapses as well as the timing of the rest of the accusatory

publications appeared hardly coincidental. They seemed tied to the political goal of discrediting not so much the refugees and their organizations as the Republican Party.

The rhetoric of the “secret Nazi network” subsided in the following years. It briefly resurfaced in 1994 in John Loftus and Mark Aarons’ book and in journalist Martin Lee’s opus of 1997. Around election time in 2000 the *Online Journal of Politics and More* by Carla Binion revived the 1980s arguments claiming that the intelligence agencies were aware of the Nazi involvement in the political right but hid this information from the public. The final twist was added by Richard Alba and Victor Nee in 2003 who wrote that the Baltic émigrés had been helpless victims pulled into the anti-communist plans of the US government and used “as a means of broadcasting the contrast between American freedoms and communist totalitarianism.”<sup>92</sup>

Noticeably, the authors of the reviewed publications continuously referred to the refugees’ demands for freedom in Eastern Europe as “liberation” – in quotation marks. Russ Bellant described the nations under the Soviet regime in neutralized terms as “countries and national groups which have communist government.”<sup>93</sup> Similarly, the concept of “Captive Nations” not only regularly appeared in quotation marks, but also often was ridiculed.<sup>94</sup> This way, the authors could imply that the immigrants, who insisted that their countries were “captives” of Communism, either misunderstood Communism or even worse, hoped to re-establish their “pro-fascist” regimes and avoid responsibility for their crimes.<sup>95</sup> As suggested by Anderson and Anderson, one could identify a former Eastern European Nazi by his use of “the buzzwords *anti-Bolshevism* and *anti-communism*” (emphasis in original).<sup>96</sup>

A persistent tendency in this rhetoric was to treat Latvian and other Eastern European immigrants not as yet another ethnic minority, but as a well-organized, secretly empowered force driven by its relentless and irrational anti-Communism and nationalism. Although, as noted earlier, there is little evidence of any substantial influence of small Eastern European immigrant groups in American politics, the rhetoric of the “secret Nazi network” overstated their importance. This way Latvians were made into an element of the omnipotent, yet “invisible hand” that the American liberal and left-leaning public felt had caused the “conservative revolution” of the New Right in the 1970s and 80s.<sup>97</sup>

On a deeper level, the rhetoric of “the secret Nazi network” reflected a foundational ideological and historical conflict over the meaning of political freedom and oppression and the reliability of the émigrés’ perspective. As noted earlier, the scrutinizing focus on the post World War II immigrants was often due to their conservative and anti-communist views, which seemed unacceptable to such intellectuals such as Bellant, Berlet and others.<sup>98</sup> They often felt a “measure of antipathy” toward people who had fled the USSR because they came with “the unwelcome message that the social system in which they had invested various degrees of hope was deeply flawed.”<sup>99</sup> The strict anti-Communism of the refugees seemed exaggerated because to them, Communism and the Soviet Union was not so much an enemy as an alternative to American capitalism and democracy. These American authors who viewed their own country as shot through with racism,<sup>100</sup> fascist sympathies,<sup>101</sup> and CIA conspiracies and public ignorance<sup>102</sup> could not help but suspect the motives of the Eastern Europeans for whom the United States was a guarantee of freedom. The post-World War II Eastern European immigrants appeared as co-conspirators in America’s hidden “fascist face.”

As noted by Mari-Ann Rikken, Washington director of the Coalition for Justice and Security, talking about the deportation of war criminal Karl Linnas to the USSR in 1986, this was “a litmus test for both liberals and conservatives. If you’re a conservative, are you as much of an anti-communist as you think you are? If you’re a liberal, are you as much of a civil libertarian as you think you are?”<sup>103</sup> As the episode of the war crimes accusations showed, the Republican Party failed to keep its pretensions about having the interests of American Latvians at heart and backed down once they felt that such immigrants’ presence could impede their run to power. On the other hand, Latvians could not feel welcomed by the American liberals either. While many of the exiles were willing to accept American democratic principles and engage in critical self-evaluation, they could not question their belief about the horrendous nature of *both* Nazi Germany and the USSR. The liberal-leaning political context’s response was hardly encouraging – often because of their anti-communist beliefs, the Latvians were identified as Nazis and used to prove the Nazi nature of American conservatives. Additionally, as many other Western liberals, the Americans also were unsympathetic to any type of nationalist sentiment that was not of the third world and that was not anti-Western.

## THE RESPONSE OF THE LATVIAN COMMUNITY

### *Strategies of self-defense*

One of the first reactions of the American Latvian community to the war crime accusations was to collect money to pay the defense attorneys. In October 16, 1976 the “Latvian Truth Fund” (Patiesības Fonds) was established. It not only raised funds for the legal defense expenses, but also prepared press releases and explanatory articles for the

Latvian émigré periodicals. At first, the fund-raising effort was successful, but by the early 1980s the donations started to slow down. Then Vilis Hāzners, who himself had been helped by the Fund, published articles arguing that the accused war criminals had actually protected the refugees and made their escape possible at the end of the war.<sup>104</sup> Therefore all Latvians in exile had a historical obligation to contribute to the Truth Fund. Moreover, Hāzners added that the accusations of war crimes could “affect any one of us.”<sup>105</sup> However, the Latvians were not completely convinced by such arguments. In fact, the issue of collaboration was much more controversial among the Latvian émigrés than Hāzners was willing to admit.

Another technique of “self-defense” was to discredit the evidence used in the accusations. The Latvian community was appalled<sup>106</sup> when they realized that among the main sources for accusations were such Soviet “products” as the discrediting brochure *Daugavas Vanagi – Who Are They?* and others. The first copies of these publications were brought to the US by Dr. Gertrude Schneider, a Holocaust survivor, who was born in Austria and deported by the Nazis to the Rīga Ghetto and later sent to Stutthof Extermination camp. In the early 1970s she worked on her Ph.D. dissertation about the Rīga Ghetto and during a research visit to Soviet Latvia she had a meeting with a high-ranking Soviet official – the Soviet Latvian Minister of Culture. Knowing her academic and deeply personal interest in the Holocaust, the Minister presented her with the Soviet-prepared pamphlets about the war criminals among the Latvian exiles in the US.<sup>107</sup> Unwittingly serving the Soviet propaganda purposes, Schneider widely publicized these materials upon her return to the US as valuable inside information without, it appears, ever questioning their reliability or the reasons why the Soviet officials had shared this

information with her. Consequently, they were also used by Jewish organizations, American war crime prosecutors and researchers.<sup>108</sup>

Angry at this gullibility, the Baltic immigrants organized press conferences, met with the prosecutors and relentlessly wrote to Congress and other government institutions in order to sensitize them about the fabricated evidence coming from the KGB.<sup>109</sup> Although the OSI denied it, the refugees claimed to have noticed a discernible pattern where the OSI would follow the “leads” about particular individuals supplied by the Soviet publications (pamphlets, books, newspapers and circulars).<sup>110</sup> They were also upset that the OSI had never questioned the methods with which the Soviet Union obtained its testimonies.<sup>111</sup>

In the process of criticizing the process of Nazi hunt, the refugees unearthed arguments that immediately backfired as in the case of a 12-page, single-spaced letter that was sent to Attorney General Edwin Meese by the Council of Latvia Officers Association of Australia and New Zealand. The letter demanded the dismantling of the OSI and blamed its creation on a world-wide Jewish conspiracy. The letter also denied mass gassing in Buchenwald and Dachau, and stated that the Jews were the most privileged ethnic group in the USSR.<sup>112</sup> Anti-Semitic statements about “Jewish lies” and “Jewish money” appeared also in Vilis Hāzners’ memoirs of 1985 about his trial in 1976. Moreover Hāzners described Simon Wiesenthal (whom he blamed for the prosecutions) quoting an article from the Soviet journal *Sovetskaya Kultura* filled with vintage Soviet anti-Zionist rhetoric.<sup>113</sup> In a sad twist, Hāzners who faced Soviet slander about himself was willing to adopt slander from the same dubious source when it came to Jews.

Such attitudes could hardly make friends for the Latvian immigrant community in the US. The OSI publicly complained that the immigrants were obstructing the investigations, rejected insinuations that the OSI had been duped by the Soviets and accused Eastern European and Baltic immigrants of trying to hide their involvement in “the most heinous of crimes.”<sup>114</sup> Journalists called the immigrants’ activities “a vitriolic campaign”,<sup>115</sup> while the World Jewish Congress described them as “a shocking” attempt to subvert historical truth.<sup>116</sup> In response, the Baltic immigrants relentlessly demanded Congressional hearings regarding the OSI’s unfair and unconstitutional use of the Soviet provided evidence.<sup>117</sup> They insisted that they were not necessarily against the prosecution of war criminals, but that they opposed the process and methods of investigating and trying these people.<sup>118</sup> In the end, their protest campaign and widely publicized conflicts with the Jewish organizations added to the already damaged image of the Latvian community.

Similarly, Eastern European and Baltic immigrants’ attempts to reach out to their representatives in Congress did not always work to their benefit. For example, Senator Paul Simon, a liberal Illinois Democrat and presidential aspirant, reportedly dispatched a telegram to Attorney General Edwin Meese urging further review before the Estonian war criminal Karl Linnas was deported to the Soviet Union. His Chicago-area constituents had asked Simon to make sure the government had studied the accusatory evidence carefully. After realizing that this was an incredibly controversial issue Simon tried to pull out. He presented himself as “a victim of an intense lobbying effort by a number of East European émigré groups” who were mainly driven by their “strong anti-Soviet feelings, a desire to prevent the resurrection of old ghosts or a tinge of anti-

Semitism.” Consequently, the media described the immigrants’ activities as a “smoke screen” intended to hide their war crimes and trick unsuspecting politicians.<sup>119</sup>

In this situation, the official Latvian immigrant organizations were quite reluctant to take an official stance on the issue of the war crime accusations. They insisted on remaining as neutral as possible. For example, the issue of Latvians being portrayed as war criminals in the movie “Billion Dollar Brain” was brought up in a meeting of the Central Board of the American Latvian Association in 1968. A. Akmentiņš from Boston made a suggestion in his letter that the ALA should sue the makers of the movie. The Board discussed the issue and merely recommended that the Latvians boycott the movie.<sup>120</sup> In the early 1980s there were some attempts to create a task force within the Daugavas Vanagi organization with the purpose of meeting with US politicians and judiciary officials and providing them with “correct information” about the Latvians who had served in the Nazi army. Within a couple of weeks this idea was dropped.<sup>121</sup>

Finally, ALA openly addressed the issue of war crime accusations in its annual Congress in Boston in 1983.<sup>122</sup> After a heated debate no specific decisions were made. Latvian immigrants expressed confusion as to how the American government could consider deporting the accused Latvians to Soviet Latvia when it had never officially acknowledged Latvia’s incorporation into the USSR.<sup>123</sup> In other words, they felt betrayed. In the search for a solution, both ALA and Daugavas Vanagi sent their representatives to a meeting of a controversial organization called Americans for Due Process which was later accused of obstructing the OSI’s work and hiding Nazis.<sup>124</sup>

In the end however, Daugavas Vanagi did not take an explicit stance on the accusations, while ALA remained mainly concentrated on criticizing the overall US

government policy toward the USSR without focusing on the war crime accusations in particular. This position provoked heated discussions in almost every meeting, especially during 1985 when Konrads Kalējs was arrested and a number of Latvian organizations and individuals in Florida were questioned about their connections to him. Although a number of Latvians voiced their dissatisfaction with the investigation, ALA's leadership refused to make official statements or publicly discuss the complexities of the Latvian past. In general, ALA's leadership argued that the accused should be tried in criminal courts, that all lawyers should have access to all Soviet archives, that the testimonies of the Soviet citizens would be done in the American courtrooms and that by no means should the accused be sent back to the Soviet Union.<sup>125</sup>

Although no large scale mobilization in this regard was initiated by ALA, it did attempt to build some personal connections with Jewish organizations, the Justice Department and the OSI, but they did not produce the expected results.<sup>126</sup> Importantly however, the American court system eventually became aware of the complexities involved in using the documentation and witness testimonies supplied by the Soviet Union<sup>127</sup> and eventually stopped using them. The extent to which the émigrés' activities had contributed to this decision remains questionable.

Thus, the Latvians as a community were engaged in an often desperate and not so appealing attempt to defend themselves and clear their public image. They tried to present their interpretation of history and reveal the problematic nature of war criminal prosecutions. Unfortunately, they also revealed their prejudices and nationalist perceptions, which were utterly unacceptable in the American political context. In other words, the efforts of the Latvian community to influence what and how Americans

wanted to remember about World War II were not successful. One of the causes of this failure might have been the contradictions in the collective memory of the Latvian community itself. On the one hand, it tried to avoid or silence self-evaluating discussions about national history, while at the same time it engaged in a debate about the meaning of collaboration.

### *The mnemonic battle of silence*

Many articles in Latvian periodicals in the 1970s and 80s reflected a strong desire to silence any discussion about the Latvian role in the Holocaust. The Latvian community took on a defensive position where they blamed Soviet conspiracy and evoked anti-Semitic beliefs, which in turn fed into the “secret Nazi network” claims of the American side. In an attempt to correct this situation and provoke an honest and, in his belief, strengthening internal debate, historian Andrievs Ezergailis (Ithaca College, NY) called on the exiles to disentangle the truth about the Holocaust in Latvia. During the early 1980s he criticized the immigrant community for remaining ignorant about the Nazi collaborators in its leadership and suggested that they come forward and publicly admit their faults.<sup>128</sup> He was an advocate of historical truth as a way to protect the community and its public image. He published books and articles questioning the myths perpetuated on both sides of the debate and documented that Latvians did play a role in the Holocaust, albeit limited and circumscribed by the German occupant authorities.<sup>129</sup>

His position prompted an ambiguous response. While Americans interpreted it as white-washing the Latvian Nazis, the Latvian community felt betrayed.<sup>130</sup> A very vociferous part of the American Latvian society insisted that Latvians must avoid

discussions about the nature and intentions of the Legion or other Latvian formations during World War II. They had to be understood only as desperate attempts to militarily protect the Latvian nation and as the highest sacrifice made by Latvian soldiers.<sup>131</sup> Others declared that Latvian soldiers were fulfilling a historical mission by “protecting” Western Europe from the threats of Communism<sup>132</sup> and that they merely fought for the nation’s independence just as Latvian soldiers had at the end of World War I.<sup>133</sup>

Here the role that some Latvians played in the Holocaust was practically erased and all discussions about it silenced. Consequently, the war crime accusations appeared “un-discussable” as well. The accused Vilis Hāzners, for example, bitterly remarked that the Latvian newspapers reported about his trial only with a few short lines here and there.<sup>134</sup> Even the highly pro-Legion publication *Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts* referred to the war crime accusations in vague language without clearly stating the content of the issue.<sup>135</sup> In general, there were not enough influential public voices offering helpful ways for the Latvian exiles to talk about their past and explain it to the American public. The Latvian community focused on the hurtfulness of the outsiders’ attacks<sup>136</sup> and nurtured feelings of being treated unfairly: “we are continuously attacked from different sides,” Zaiga Blumberga lamented.<sup>137</sup> Former exile and political scientist Atis Lejiņš<sup>138</sup> called this “the victim syndrome” where the Latvians insisted on having been perpetual and innocent underdogs of the world’s great powers. The Latvian community assumed a defensive position and made their collective memory about “forgetting,” not remembering.

### *The meaning of collaboration*

However, the tensions raised by the portrayal of Latvians as war criminals could not be contained completely. They became particularly intensified in the context of another controversial outside influence, namely, the Soviet instigated Liaison Committee for the Cultural Relations with Countrymen Abroad. Its declared purpose was merely building cultural contacts with Latvians abroad, while in reality its goal was also to disorganize the Latvian centers abroad, to control exiles' political activities and discredit them in the eyes of the West.<sup>139</sup> Faced with the increasing activity of the LCCR, the émigrés found themselves in a very difficult position. The Soviets demanded that the exiles downplay their anti-Communist demands if they wanted to meet the Soviet Latvian intelligentsia, which in turn held the promise of revitalizing Latvianness abroad. The conflict over the contacts with the LCCR brought into the open various generational, cultural and ideological disagreements that had already been brewing in the exile community.<sup>140</sup> It also forced to the level of public rhetoric a debate over the meaning of collaboration. This discussion, I suggest, was directly linked to the war crime accusations. Fighting over the LCCR, at a certain point, the Latvians had to ask: how can we tell traitors from patriots today and in the past, and who is worse – a soldier in the Nazi army or a gullible admirer of the Soviet “cultural achievements”?

It is important to note that the conflicts in the 1970s and 80s had deeper roots in the immediate post-emigration period when politically active Latvians were split into two major groups. One of them centered around the former politicians of the parliamentary republic (1921-1934), who strongly believed in liberal democracy. The second group was the so-called “Valdmanieši” or the followers of Alfrēds Valdmanis – a dedicated

supporter of the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis (1934-1940). While the first group deeply disliked anything related to Ulmanis' regime as well as Latvian collaboration with the Nazis, the second group openly glorified Ulmanis' leadership, showed deep distrust for political parties of the 1920s, the Constitution of 1921, and even approved of Latvian involvement in the Nazi administration and military forces.<sup>141</sup> This inherited conflict grew even stronger when the new generation of American born Latvians made claims to influence in the refugee community. This new generation was explicitly anti-Ulmanist and truly believed in the democratic future of the Latvian state. They also felt stifled and controlled by the older generations nationalist and often anti-Semitic beliefs. Thus, the disagreements of the 1970s and 1980s about the cultural contacts and war crimes played out some of the defining conflicts of this refugee society.

In the 1970s, the liberal oriented American context was dominated by the idea of "peaceful co-existence" with the USSR and it encouraged the Latvian émigrés also to believe that collaboration with the Nazis was undeniably worse than contacts with the Soviets. However, most Latvians felt that they had to sort out the devastating political inheritance from both the Nazi and the Soviet regimes, which turned out to be a difficult task and produced a serious ideological and mnemonic intragroup conflict. This issue came up in 1977 during a dramatic meeting of the ALA's Annual Congress, where two opposing positions clashed.<sup>142</sup> One group of émigrés (led by such notable figures as V. Vārsbergs and J. Pružinskis) represented the views of the older generation and insisted that collaboration with the Soviets was much more immoral than having served in the Nazi army. To them, Soviet Latvian movie showings and choir concerts were just a smoke-screen for Soviet intentions to discredit exile nationalist ideas and thus destroy the

last hope for the revival of a Latvian nationalist movement. The proponents of these beliefs were convinced that Latvians needed to remain unified ideologically and culturally, and offered two unquestionable premises for this purpose. First, the Soviet Latvian intellectuals were passive, brain-washed, collaborationist and therefore non-Latvian.<sup>143</sup> Second, the Latvian soldiers during World War II were national heroes because they were active and self-sacrificing. In sum, to this nationalist oriented part of Latvian exile community, Communism was worse than Nazism. From this it followed that an émigré interested in the products of the passive Soviet intelligentsia was a collaborationist, while action even on behalf of the Nazis was justifiable,<sup>144</sup> that is, action was morally superior to passive adaptation.

Another group, led by a writer of the new generation Aivars Ruņģis believed, that, first, Latvian collaboration with the Nazis was as treacherous as serving the communists and, second, that cultural contacts with Soviet Latvia as such were not a form of collaboration. They warned against authoritarianism in their opponents' position as it could make Latvianness anachronistic and unable to adapt to the changing times.<sup>145</sup> This position insisted that the individual's freedom of consciousness should be the basic principle for building a Latvian community in exile. Its premise was that the pursuit of national beliefs should be left to the individual, not regulated by the community.

The conflict between the two positions became particularly inflamed in 1983 when exile poets Valdis Krāslavietis and Olafs Stumbrs were banned from participation in the Latvian Song festival in the US. The grounds for exclusion were "the disagreement between the Organizing Committee's national views and the actions of the above-mentioned poets",<sup>146</sup> namely, their regular visits to Soviet Latvia. Ruņģis, who at the time

led the exile Latvian Writers' Association, publicly criticized this decision. This met with a loud counter-attack on the pages of the Latvian periodicals. Ruņģis' opponents argued that the two authors did not have the "correct national position" and had become "communist sympathizers."<sup>147</sup> They suggested that those who visited Soviet Latvia and participated in Soviet cultural events must wear a button saying "I collaborated with the occupants of the fatherland. I am a deserter."<sup>148</sup>

Ruņģis questioned the concept of the "correct national position" and proposed a different caption: "I collaborated with the occupants of the fatherland during the German times. I am accused of being a Nazi."<sup>149</sup> He emphasized that Latvian émigrés, especially in Canada and the United States, were "living with a heavy emotional burden" and hurt national pride due to the war crime accusations.<sup>150</sup> Therefore he criticized the exile Latvians for using a double standard of collaboration where service to the Nazi totalitarian regime was justified in the name of fighting Communist oppression. He warned that this inconsistency and dishonesty could provoke fragmentation in the exile community.

The two sides agreed about the dangers of the internal splitting of the Latvian community and about the need to build a positive public image. They disagreed, however, over the means for achieving these ends and, consequently, a deeper ideological rift surfaced. As noted earlier, this was a continuation of a long-standing conflict between authoritarian and democratic views among the exiles. Some of the exiles felt that democracy was hardly a guarantor for national goals, while authoritarianism was the highest point in the life of the Latvian nation.<sup>151</sup> They thought that the period of Latvian democracy was merely a transitional stage and that American democracy was only an

instrument for fighting the Soviets. They were also convinced that it was possible to represent themselves to the American public as a heroic and admirable nation without ever questioning the controversies of the Latvian past.<sup>152</sup>

Their opponents insisted that the exiles should lead the Latvians to democracy through the exile community's internal "democratization," by which they meant critical discussion about Latvian relations to *all* totalitarian regimes.<sup>153</sup> They felt embarrassed about the outdated nationalist and authoritarian beliefs that made Latvians appear suspicious in Americans' eyes. Thus, these exiles had internalized the American criticism and were passionately seeking a new way to be simultaneously democratic, nationalist, anti-Communist and loyal American citizens.<sup>154</sup> To some this proved to be a politically and personally difficult task.<sup>155</sup>

What were the outcomes for the Latvian community and its collective memory? First, Latvians were made increasingly aware of how important national history was in shaping their identity and public image. Second, they turned out not to have a unified collective memory when confronted with the sudden scrutiny of outsiders. Some tried to encapsulate only one interpretation of history, others suggested a purifying critique of how and what was remembered. No consensus was reached, and as the break-down of the USSR pushed these issues to the background, the Latvians abroad as well as in Latvia still have not fully resolved them. Undeniably however, it was the exile Latvians and their debates that worked to create an honest and objective context for discussing Latvian role in the Holocaust, which is still a notably difficult task to master for Latvians in Latvia.<sup>156</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Overall, during the Nazi hunt campaign the Latvian community was caught in an ideological Catch-22. If the Latvians wanted to preserve their anti-Communist nationalism, the American context interpreted them as suspicious Nazis. And if they were to be self-critical, they were afraid of becoming tools in the hands of Soviet propaganda and disintegrating as a political force. This lose-lose situation was determined by the fact that they were political refugees in a context where both culturally and ideologically they were perceived as and felt like aliens. No matter which way they turned, they faced misunderstanding as their opponents proved exploitative and ignorant and their allies manipulative and unreliable. As Eduards Upenieks wrote in 1985 that the Latvians had gone through three “schools” of political training – the communist oppression, the Nazi destruction and the American indifferentism and that all of them had taught them to believe only in themselves and persist in their struggle.<sup>157</sup>

This study reveals how small immigrant groups are forced into mnemonic battles that polarize their communities. This episode in the experience of American Latvians is also a telling example of the obstacles that a small immigrant group faces in trying to gain political influence. Driven by a belief that their demand for national independence is a struggle for freedom, they can face surprising realization that they are perceived as a suspicious anti-freedom force in their new country. Finally, this case also illuminates the ways that mainstream political and cultural agents in host countries can on the surface express concern for small immigrant groups, while in reality having no true interest in either their past or present.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, this how a Latvian activist Māris Manteniēks described his feelings at the time: “One evening in February 1987, in fact it was Thursday, February 12, I got a call from my teenage daughter.... She told me to turn the TV on to channel three. I did. The news story was about Nazi collaborators living in the US in particular it talked about newly disclosed information from the Simon Wiesenthal Center. It claimed that the Center had submitted 74 names to the OSI, most of which were said to be of ‘the notorious German SS controlled death squads of Lithuanians and Latvians. The battalions exterminated tens of thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish Eastern Europeans.’ ... After the news story I went back to the telephone. My daughter asked me in all sincerity, ‘Dad, were you a Nazi too, in Latvia?’ The question sent chills down my spine. After I regained my composure, I assured my daughter that I was not a Nazi. I told her that there never was a Nazi party in Latvia and that I was too young to be conscripted into the German Army. It took a long time to calm my nerves from the experience... If my daughter held these suspicions, what about my boss, my friends and neighbors?” (Māris Manteniēks, personal communication).

<sup>2</sup> Maruta Kārklis, Līga Streips and Laimons Streips, eds., The Latvians in America 1640-1973: A Chronology and Fact Book (Dobbs Ferry, NY: 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Kārlis Kangeris, Nacionālsociālistiskās Vācijas plāni Baltijā un to izpaušme Latvijas Ģenerālapgabala kultūrpolitikā. In Bibliotēkas, grāmatniecība, ideoloģija Otrā pasaules kara laikā (1939-1945): Konferences materiāli (Rīga: 1999), 24-41.

<sup>4</sup> It also has to be noted that it is difficult to ascertain for sure the professions and occupations of Latvian refugees in the US due to the fact that in order to emigrate many

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of them were encouraged to identify themselves as “peasants” and many of them started their life in the US working on farms.

<sup>5</sup> On the history of the Displaced Persons, see Mark Wyman, DP: Europe’s Displaced Persons, 1945-1951 (Philadelphia: 1989)).

<sup>6</sup> On this see Andrew Ezergailis, The Holocaust in Latvia (Washington DC, 1996) and Leo Dribins, Ēbreji Latvijā (Rīga, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> The analysis also covers articles from the Canadian Latvian journal *Jaunā Gaita* because it was intended for both American and Canadian Latvian audiences.

<sup>8</sup> David Thelen, ed. Memory and American History (Bloomington, 1990), ix.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Eviatar Zerubavel. 1996. Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past. Qualitative Sociology 10, no. 2: 293-299; Yael Zerubavel. 1994. The Death of Memory and the Memory of Death: Masada and the Holocaust as Historical Metaphors. Representations 45: 72-100; Jeffrey K. Olick. 1999. Collective Memory: The Two Cultures. Sociological Theory 17, no. 3: 333-348; Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins. 1998. Social Memory Studies: From “Collective Memory” to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices. Annual Review of Sociology 24: 105-140.

<sup>10</sup> On this see, Barbie Zelizer. 1995. Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies. Critical Studies in Mass Communication 12: 214-259.

<sup>11</sup> April Schultz. 1991. ‘The Pride of the Race Had Been Touched’: The 1925 Norse-American Immigration Centennial and Ethnic Identity. Journal of American History 77: 1265-1295.

<sup>12</sup> Zerubavel, 1996: 296.

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Kammen. 1995. Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory. History and Theory 34, no. 3: 245-261.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, John Myers. 2005. The Role of Collective Memory in the Dominant-Minority Group Struggle in America or the Education of Theresa Malloy. ASA Annual Meeting Presentation; John Myers. 2006. Collective Memory as Part of Racism: A Mnemonic Battle in Easton, Maryland. ASA Annual Meeting Presentation.

<sup>15</sup> The latter idea was suggested by John Myers in personal communication. Among the most recent studies on immigration in the United States see, for example, Ruben Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes, eds., Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America (Berkeley, 2001); Ronald H. Bayor, Ronald H., ed., Race and Ethnicity in America: A Concise History (New York, 2003); Reed Ueda, Reed Postwar Immigrant America: A Social History (Boston: 1994); Alejandro Portes and Ruben R. Rumbaut, Immigrant America: A Portrait (Berkeley, 1990); Guillermina Jasso and Mark R. Rosenzweig, The New Chosen People: Immigrants in the United States (New York, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> Two rare and interesting studies about small Eastern European immigrant communities in the US were Mark M. Stolarik. 2004. Slovak Nationalism in the USA as Reflected in the Slovak-American Press, 1885-1918. Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism 31: 65-76, and Nadege Ragaru and Amilda Dymi. 2004. The Albanian-American Community in the United States: the Story of a Diaspora. Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism 31: 45-63.

<sup>17</sup> For example, in the last decade only three studies have dealt specifically with the experience of Baltic immigrants – Allison Smith, Abigail Stewart and David Winter. 2004. Close Encounters with the Midwest: Forming Identity in a Bicultural Context.

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Political Psychology 24, no. 4: 611-641; Lorraine Majka and Brendan Mullan. 2002.

Ethnic Communities and Ethnic Organizations Reconsidered: South-East Asians and Eastern Europeans in Chicago. International Migration 40, no. 2: 71-92; Gary Hartman.

1998. Building the Ideal Immigrant: Reconciling Lithuanianism and 100 Percent Americanism to Create a Respectable Nationalist Movement, 1870-1922. Journal of

American Ethnic History 18, no. 1: 36-76.

<sup>18</sup> David Knoke and Richard B. Felson. 1974. Ethnic Stratification and Political Cleavage in the United States, 1952-69. The American Journal of Sociology 80, no. 3: 640.

<sup>19</sup> Gerson, Louis L. 1976. Ethnics in American Politics. The Journal of Politics 38, no. 3: 336-346.

<sup>20</sup> Steven Martin Cohen and Robert E. Kapsis. 1977. Religion, Ethnicity, and Party Affiliation in the U.S.: Evidence from Pooled Electoral Surveys, 1968-72. American Journal of Sociology 56, no. 2 : 637-653.

<sup>21</sup> Garrett, Stephen A. Garrett. 1978. Eastern European Ethnic Groups and American Foreign Policy. Political Science Quarterly 93, no. 2: 301-322.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Spencer Rich “Reagan Hits Subjugation” The Washington Post, August 18, 1984, A1.

<sup>23</sup> Ilgvars Spilners, Mēs uzvarējām! (Rīga, 1989), 212.

<sup>24</sup> The Daugavas Vanagi (Daugavas’ Hawks) or Latvian Welfare Organization was founded in the Displaced Persons camps in Germany by Latvian veterans of the World War II and eventually expanded and incorporated different groups of the exile community. Its main purpose was to provide financial and emotional support to the exiled

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veterans however it also played a distinctly nationalist political role in the Latvian immigrant community.

<sup>25</sup> ALA archives, The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>26</sup> In my personal conversations with American Latvians some of them have revealed that they had voted for Democrats and usually these persons were not particularly involved with the exile society and were considerably assimilated. Unfortunately, there is no more reliable and generalizable data about American Latvian voting behavior available.

<sup>27</sup> Pasztor was the founder and first national chairman of the Republican Heritage Groups (Nationalities) Council. He was also a supporter of American Latvian activities. For example, he regularly sent greetings to the Congress of the Latvian American Association in the early 1970s (ALA archives, The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia, PA). He has been presented as a highly controversial figure with connections to the Hungarian Fascists. However, one the ALA's leaders Ilgvars Spilners called him a "Hungarian freedom fighter" (Spilners, 1989: 84).

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Martin A. Lee, The Beast Reawakens (Boston, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Ezergailis, Nazi/Soviet Disinformation about the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Latvia. Daugavas Vanagi: Who are They? Revisited (Riga, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Rudīte Vīksne, The Arājs' Commando Member as Seen in the KGB Trial Files: Social Standing, Education, Motives for Joining It, and Sentences Received. In The Issues of the Holocaust Research in Latvia: Reports of an International Conference 16-17 October 2000 (Rīga, 2001), 350-380.

<sup>31</sup> The text of the resolution of the United States Displaced Persons Commission stated that "the Baltic Waffen S.S. Units (Baltic Legions) are to be considered as separate and

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distinct in purpose, ideology, activities, and qualifications for membership from the German S.S. and therefore the Commission holds them not to be a movement hostile to the Government of the United States under Section 13 of the Displaced Persons Act, as amended” (Ezergailis, 2005: 64).

<sup>32</sup> Ezergailis, 2005: 76-7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>34</sup> Local New York state newspapers published numerous articles about Hāznerns’ case, which he reprinted in his memoirs – see Vilis Hāznerns, Varmācības torni II (Lincoln, 1985), 425-483.

<sup>35</sup> Ralph Blumenthal “Some Suspected of Nazi War Crimes Are Known as Model Citizens” The New York Times, October 18, 1976, A2.

<sup>36</sup> Howard Blum, Wanted! The Search for Nazis in America (New York, 1977)

<sup>37</sup> Rochelle G. Saidel, The Outraged Conscience: Seekers of Justice for Nazi War Criminals in America (Albany, 1984), 109.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>39</sup> One of the biggest authorities on former Nazis worldwide, Simon Wiesenthal, actually described Latvians, Ukrainians and Lithuanians as the most likely Nazi collaborators among other Eastern Europeans (A.O. Sulzberger “Proposal to Speed War Crimes Cases Studied” The New York Times, November 15, 1981, A27).

<sup>40</sup> Allan Ryan, Quiet Neighbors: Prosecuting Nazi War Criminals in America (San Diego: 1984), 5.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 31.

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<sup>42</sup> In his favorable review of Ryan’s book, Stephen Cohen wrote about the immigration quotas that “favored Eastern European ethnic groups (such as Latvians), with virtually no surviving Jews” (“The Nazis Next Door” The Washington Post December 30, 1984, 3). Joseph Fogel in his review also specifically mentioned Latvians (“Bookshelf: The Nazis Among Us” Wall Street Journal January 10, 1985, 1).

<sup>43</sup> “Ruling for Suspect in War Crime Case” The New York Times July 8, 1983, B2.

<sup>44</sup> “Deporting Upheld Over Link to Nazis” The New York Times September 19, 1985, B13.

<sup>45</sup> “A War Crimes Suspect Loses High Court Plea” The New York Times June 17, 1986, B3.

<sup>46</sup> Ralph Blumenthal “Man Facing Ouster for War Crimes Flees U.S.” The New York Times October 15, 1988, 14; “West Germany Detains War Criminal Suspect” The New York Times October 20, 1988, A13; “Fugitive Ex-Nazi Given German Visa” The New York Times October 30, 1988, A9.

<sup>47</sup> “Germany Closes a Nazi Case for Latvian in Poor Health” The New York Times February 19, 1994, 15.

<sup>48</sup> “Judge to Rule on an L.I. Man Accused in Slaughter of Jews” The New York Times October 16, 1983, 42.

<sup>49</sup> Robert MacFadden “Blast at Home of Ex-War Crimes Suspect Injures One” The New York Times September 7, 1985, 1.25; “L.I. Bomb Victim Stable” The New York Times September 8, 1985, A40; “Aid Offers Flow to L.I. Bomb Victim” The New York Times September 13, 1985, B2; Judith Cummings “F.B.I. Says Jewish Defense League May have Planted Fatal Bombs” The New York Times November 9, 1985, 1.1; Philip Shenon

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“F.B.I. Chief Warns Arabs of Danger” The New York Times December 11, 1985, A13;

“F.B.I. Moving on Blasts Laid to Jewish Extremists” The New York Times July 17, 1986, A.16.

<sup>50</sup> “Appellate Court Bars Deportation” The New York Times January 13, 1985, A19.

<sup>51</sup> “Latvian Native Arrested” The New York Times April 20, 1985, A11.

<sup>52</sup> Mary Thornton “East European Emigres are Accused of Impeding Hunt for Nazi in US” The Washington Post April 6, 1985, A9.

<sup>53</sup> “U.S. Trying to Deport a War Crimes Suspect” The New York Times August 24, 1988, B6. Another report about the case appeared in November (“U.S. Says Nazi Suspect Was Guard for Army” The New York Times November 5, 1988, 1.7).

<sup>54</sup> “Bring Remaining Nazi War Criminals to Justice (Letter)” The New York Times May 29, 1992, A28.

<sup>55</sup> “U.S. Trying to Deport a War Crimes Suspect” The New York Times August 24, 1988, B6.

<sup>56</sup> “U.S. Says Nazi Suspect Was Guard for Army” The New York Times November 5, 1988, 1.7.

<sup>57</sup> Ezergailis, 2005: 35-8.

<sup>58</sup> Hāzners, 1985: 441, 447-8.

<sup>59</sup> “Appellate Court Bars Deportation” The New York Times January 13, 1985, A19.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, George Szamuely. 1988. Did the U.S. Recruit Nazi War Criminals?

The Commentary 85, no. 6: 50-53. Māris Mantenieks also remembers that: “The American Jewish Committee did not participate in this diatribe against the Eastern Europeans. In fact the Cleveland Chapter, under Dr. Martin Plax, called together the

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leaders of the Baltic and Ukrainian community during Demanjuk's trial and tried to sooth the built-up resentment between the Jewish and Eastern European people. He explained the Committee's position that the accusations and trials are of no benefit to either side" (personal communication).

<sup>61</sup> As revealed in the report of the General Accounting Office (the investigative arm of Congress) published in 1978, the FBI and the CIA admitted that they had utilized some Nazi war criminals and collaborators immediately after the war (Saidel, 1984: 116).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Higham, American Swastika (Garden City, NY: 1985).

<sup>65</sup> Scott Anderson and Jon Lee Anderson, Inside the League: The Shocking Expose of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League (New York: 1986), 12.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>67</sup> Christopher Simpson, Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects on the Cold War (New York, 1988), 10.

<sup>68</sup> John Loftus and Mark Aarons, The Secret War Against the Jews: How Western Espionage Betrayed the Jewish People (New York: 1994).

<sup>69</sup> Blum, 1977: 220.

<sup>70</sup> Simpson, 1988: 204-207.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Blum 1977: 220; Russ Bellant, Old Nazis, the New Right and the Reagan Administration: The Role of Domestic Fascist Network in the Republican Party and their Effect on U.S. Cold War Politics (Cambridge, MA: 1989).

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<sup>72</sup> Anderson&Anderson, 1986: 35, 45.

<sup>73</sup> On this see Ezergailis, 2005: 184.

<sup>74</sup> Simpson, 1988: 204-207

<sup>75</sup> Bellant,1989: 19.

<sup>76</sup> Saidel, 1984: 183.

<sup>77</sup> Simpson, 1988: 10.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 277.

<sup>79</sup> Anderson&Anderson, 1986: 30.

<sup>80</sup> The reason I identify this organization as liberal and pro-Democrat is based on how they describe themselves. Their website states: “Political Research Associates is a progressive think tank devoted to supporting movements that are building a more just and inclusive democratic society. (...) By responding to specific information requests and through production of special reports and resource kits, PRA helps the media, activists and the general public understand and challenge the Right. Truly a behind-the-scenes-player, PRA is essential to the progressive movement by supporting those on the front lines who spend much of their energy opposing well designed and fully funded right-wing attacks on democracy, diversity and pluralism.”

<sup>81</sup> Bellant, 1989: 15.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>84</sup> “Bush Campaign Committee Contains Figures Linked to Anti-Semitic and Fascist Backgrounds” The Washington Jewish Week September 8, 1988, 2.

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<sup>85</sup> Richard Berke “Bush Panelist out After Reports of Anti-Jewish Ties” The New York Times September 9, 1988, A15.

<sup>86</sup> David Lee Preston “Fired Bush Backer One of Several with Possible Nazi Link” Philadelphia Inquirer September 10, 1988, A01.

<sup>87</sup> Editorial “The Fascist Connection” Boston Globe September 14, 1988, 22.

<sup>88</sup> “Bush Backer Barred over Nazi Links” Philadelphia Inquirer November 4, 1988, A15.

<sup>89</sup> Russ Bellant “Will Bush Purge Nazi Collaborators in the G.O.P.” The New York Times November 19, 1988, 27.

<sup>90</sup> This article is currently available on the website [www.scepticfiles.org](http://www.scepticfiles.org).

<sup>91</sup> Bellant, 1989:33 and 1988: 27.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Alba and Victor Nee, Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration (Cambridge, MA: 2003), 147.

<sup>93</sup> Bellant, 1989: 29.

<sup>94</sup> The Captive Nations concept exemplified the conflict between Democratic liberals and Eastern European émigrés. In 1959 the Congress had passed a law that required the President to declare a Captive Nations Week every year with a Resolution, which at the time openly criticized the Soviet oppression in Eastern Europe. During the Presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson the attitude of the US government changed and the Captive Nations Week as well as the Assembly of the Captive European Nations (ACEN) came under political pressure. The text of the Presidential Resolution was greatly softened and the funding for the ACEN and the Captive Nations Week gradually decreased. The Eastern European émigrés expressed vehement opposition to these changes. In response, the leaders and activists of ACEN were put under intense “brain-wash” to convince them

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to support the Democratic idea of “co-existence” with the USSR (see descriptions of such meetings in Vilis Hāzners, Varmācības torņi I (Lincoln, 1977), 519-20). At the same time, American newspapers published several articles in the early 1960s poking fun at the description of Cossakia, Idel-Ural, Ukraine and White Ruthenia as “Captive Nations” and criticizing the implicit anti-Russian bias in the concept of Captive Nations. The articles demanded that the current administrations stop supporting ACEN and the Captive Nations Week as remnants of an outdated Cold War rhetoric and as results of Congressional subservience to émigré pressures (see, for example, Editorial. “Captive Nations” The Washington Post July 11, 1964, A-10; Bernard Gwertzman “Captive Nations Week Proclaimed” The Evening Star (Washington D.C.), July 19, 1966, A-10; Editorial “Captive Congressmen” The Washington Post July 10, 1967, A20). By the early 1970s, ACEN and the Captive Nations Week had been almost completely eradicated until Ronald Reagan revived it.

<sup>95</sup> Blum, 1977: 220.

<sup>96</sup> Anderson&Anderson, 1986: 13.

<sup>97</sup> On the “conservative revolution” see, for example, Jerome Himmelstein, To the Right: the Transformation of American Conservatism (Berkeley, CA: 1992).

<sup>98</sup> I do not suggest that the reviewed authors were necessarily politically biased. However it is difficult not to notice their sympathies for the Democratic politicians and critique toward the Republicans. It is also known that some of them were Communist party sympathizers such Charles R. Allen, some were actively involved in Democratic politics such as journalist Ralph Blumenthal or were self-identified progressive liberals such as Chip Berlet and Russ Bellant.

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<sup>99</sup> Paul Hollander, Political Will and Personal Belief: The Decline and Fall of Soviet Communism (New Haven: 1999), 37.

<sup>100</sup> Allan, 1984: 27.

<sup>101</sup> Bellant, 1989:33.

<sup>102</sup> Higham, 1985: 301.

<sup>103</sup> Jay Mathews “U.S. Nazi Hunters Brace for Criticism; Doubts about Soviet Evidence Surround Move to Deport Linnas” The Washington Post July 13, 1986, a5.

<sup>104</sup> Vilis Hāzners. 1982. Patiesības Fonds un mēs. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts, 6: 3-7.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>106</sup> Atis Lejiņš, interview, May 10, 2006.

<sup>107</sup> Saidel, 1984: 13.

<sup>108</sup> For example, Christopher Simpson listed on its bibliography the KGB prepared pamphlet E. Avotiņš, J. Dzirkalis and V. Pētersons, Daugavas Vanagi (Rīga, 1963) as one of his sources (Simpson, 1988: 357). On the details of the use of Soviet evidence in North American Nazi prosecutions see S. Paul Zumbakis, Soviet Evidence in North American Courts (Chicago, 1986) and Ezergailis 2005.

<sup>109</sup> Stuart Taylor “Emigres Criticize U.S. Nazi-Hunters” The New York Times April 21, 1985, A11; Jay Mathews “U.S. Nazi Hunters Brace for Criticism; Doubts about Soviet Evidence Surround Move to Deport Linnas” The Washington Post July 13, 1986, a5.

<sup>110</sup> Zumbakis,1986: 13.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 26.

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<sup>112</sup> Mary Thornton “East European Emigres Are Accused of Impeding Hunt for Nazis in U.S.; Response Charges Jewish Organizations With Aiding Soviets” The Washington Post April 6, 1985, 9.

<sup>113</sup> Hāzners, 1985: 30-35.

<sup>114</sup> Thorton, 1985: 9.

<sup>115</sup> Anderson&Anderson, 1986: 270.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Stuart Taylor “Emigres Criticize U.S. Nazi-Hunters” The New York Times April 21, 1985, A11.

<sup>118</sup> Māris Mantenieks, personal communication.

<sup>119</sup> Robert Greenberger “East European Émigré Groups Fight U.S. Efforts to Pursue Nazi War Criminals Living in America” The Wall Street Journal May 4, 1987, 1.

<sup>120</sup> ALA archives, The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>121</sup> Hāzners, 1985: 411.

<sup>122</sup> Bruno Albats and Visvaldis V. Klīve, ALA 35: 1951-1986 (Lincoln, 1986), 143.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>124</sup> Oļģerts Balodis “Kā notiek izmeklēšanas kara noziegumos” Laiks March 7, 1984.

<sup>125</sup> Valdis Pavlovskis, interview, August 3, 2006.

<sup>126</sup> Albats Klīve, 1986: 161. ALA’s president at the time Aristīds Lembergs remembered: “what did at the time was talking to Jewish organizations in America. I organized the meeting with World Jewish Congress. ... We met in New York ... and we discussed our situation with them, and discussed our position with them. There wasn’t too much success in our discussion” (Aristīds Lembergs, interview, July 30, 2006).

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<sup>127</sup> There were three court cases that dealt with the issue of whether the Soviet provided evidence is admissible in the American courts. In all these cases it was ruled that Soviet evidence does not need to be excluded as such, however it was agreed that “communist produced evidence is suspect because of Soviet motives, the manner in which it is obtained and its evidentiary value” (Zumbakis, 1986: 123).

<sup>128</sup> Andrievs Ezergailis. 1980. Domājot par Lešinski – II. Jaunā Gaita 129: 22.

<sup>129</sup> Ezergailis, 1996.

<sup>130</sup> Andrievs Ezergailis, interview, April 9, 2006. Also, Ezergailis, 2005: 194.

<sup>131</sup> Ernests Blanks. 1972. Latvijas valstssvētkos. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 5: 1-3; V. Lagzdiņš. 1980. Tagad jācīnās ar patiesības ieročiem! Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 1: 1-4; Arturs Silgailis. 1988. Latviešu leģiona nozīme. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 2: 3-7.

<sup>132</sup> Blanks, Ernests. 1967. Baltijas valstu vēsturiskā loma. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 1: 14-16.

<sup>133</sup> Irma Dankere. 1984. Latvietība. Treji Vārti 98: 1-3.

<sup>134</sup> Hāzners, 1985: 59.

<sup>135</sup> V. Frišvalds. 1977. Daugavas Vanagi – nacionālās idejas paudēji. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 2: 6.

<sup>136</sup> Andrievs Ezergailis, interview, April 9, 2006.

<sup>137</sup> Zaiga Blumberga. 1981. Kā mēs iespaidojam pasaules politiku un kā tā iespaido mūs. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 2: 3. The same attitude is often promoted in the independent Latvia of post-1991.

<sup>138</sup> Atis Lejiņš, interview, May 10, 2006.

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<sup>139</sup> Ezergailis, 2005: 67; Atis Lejiņš “Kurš bija kaķis, kurš pele? Kultūras sakaru spēle ar VDK” Diena 11 September, 2004, 15.

<sup>140</sup> For example, the exiles fought over the meaning of authentically Latvian culture and ended up vigorously censoring the products of the Soviet Latvian intelligentsia (Baņuta Rubesa “Alternatīvā Latvija” SestDiena 23 October, 1999, 9).

<sup>141</sup> The conflict also had some ugly sides when, for example, the “Ulmanists” denounced the “parliamentarists” as communists to the US authorities during the early 1950s as testified in Ilmars Bastjānis-Krasts, Pašvēsture: bēgļu gaitās un trimdā Amerikā (Rīga: 2001), 102.

<sup>142</sup> Albats and Klīve, 1986: 118.

<sup>143</sup> See, for example, Alberts Eglītis. 1982. Pašu problēmas, pašu uzdevums. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 2: 5-9.

<sup>144</sup> On these arguments see, J. Frišvalds. 1977. Daugavas Vanagi – nacionālās idejas paudēji. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 2: 2-6; Daumants Hāzners. 1982. 8. maijs. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 2: 10-13.

<sup>145</sup> Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga. 1978. Par brīvību. Jaunā Gaita 117: 3-8.

<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Aivars Ruņģis. 1984. Izklaidētās trimdinieku saimes sociālās saites – to uzturēšana un sargāšana. Treji Vārti 98: 9.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 10-11.

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<sup>151</sup> A. Liepiņa. 1978. Kārlis Ulmanis. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 5: 13-17; Jāzeps Grodnis. 1967. Domas par Latvijas valsti. Jaunā Gaita 64: 45-7

<sup>152</sup> Arturs Neparis. 1962. Autoritārās Latvijas ideoloģija: komentāri par komentāriem. Jaunā Gaita 37: 146-7; Pēteris Aigars. 1968. Nacionālie centieni nemirst. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 6: 4-9; Viesturs Kandis. 1985. Tauta nav iebraucamā vieta. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 5: 22-25.

<sup>153</sup> Laimons Streips. 1967. Domas par Latvijas valsti. Jaunā Gaita 62: 41-4; Jāzeps Lelis. 1967. Latviešu trimdas sabiedrības vērtējums. Jaunā Gaita 63: 40-48; Jānis Peniķis. 1984. Latvijas parlamentārais posms: sasniegums vai neizdevies eksperiments? Akadēmiskā Dzīve 26: 3-15. A recent example of such self-critical, yet historically grounded approach to Latvian history is a Canadian Latvian Modris Eksteins' book Walking Since Daybreak: A Story of Eastern Europe, World War II, and the Heart of Our Century (Boston, 2000).

<sup>154</sup> On some of the suggestions in this regard see, for example, Pāvils Klāns. 1977. Jaunā latvieša vieta – pa kreisi no vidus? Jaunā Gaita 114: 16-58, 64; Andrievs Ezergailis. 1979. Vai ir vajadzīga jauna trimdas nacionālpolitika? Jaunā Gaita 122: 10-14; Haralds Biezais. 1980. Faktu un teorijas pretrunas komunistu tautas jēdzienā. Jaunā Gaita 127: 14-18; Tadeušs Puisāns. 1981. Pulkvedis Kalpaks un mūsu nacionālisms. Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts 2: 3-6.

<sup>155</sup> Psychologist Uldis Bergs discussed the state of mind of American Latvians as being dangerously close to mental disorder (Uldis Bergs. 1974. Psiholoģiskās implikācijas kultūras maiņā. Jauna Gaita 99: 17-22). American essayist Sven Birkerts in his memoirs even described growing up Latvian in the 1950s and 60s as a childhood trauma (My Sky Blue Trades: Growing Up Counter in a Contrary Time (New York: 2002)).

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<sup>156</sup> For example, in Spring of 2005 a group of Latvian filmmakers released a documentary containing memories of the children of Herberts Cukurs, an aviator and a known member of Arājs Commando executed by Israeli Mossad in Brazil in 1965. In addition, an exhibition called “The Presumption of Innocence” about Cukurs’ life was set up in major port city Liepāja. The movie and the exhibition tried to minimize Cukurs’ involvement in the Holocaust suggesting that there was “more than one story” about this (Gunita Nagle and Nora Driķe “Nav tiesāts, tomēr nav arī nevainīgs” Diena May 17, 2005, 3). In response, Israel’s embassy in Latvia, Jewish organizations and a number of public figures expressed their shock over these attempts to white-wash Cukurs (Askolds Rodins “Lidotājs” Diena May 25, 2005, 2; Efraims Zurofs “Herberts Cukurs. Noteikti vainīgs” Diena June 7, 2005, 2; “Vīzentāla centrs iesniedz materiālus par Cukura darbību” Diena June 8, 2005, 5). A heated public debate revealed that a considerable part of Latvian society was openly willing to deny Latvian involvement in the Holocaust. Even more recently, a former Legionary and a politician Visvaldis Lācis in his new “history” about the Latvian Legion completely ignored the possibility of some of the Legionaries’ participation in the genocide against Jews (Latviešu Leģions patiesības gaismā (Rīga: 2006)).

<sup>157</sup> Nacionālisms. Jaunā Gaita 151, 1985: 42.